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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 002492

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: XINJIANG: INCREASED ETHNIC TENSIONS AND HIGH SECURITY

REF: A. BEIJING 2183
[1](#)B. BEIJING 1055

Classified By: Classified by Political Section Chief Aubrey Carlson.
Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Ethnic tension between Han Chinese and Uighurs has increased dramatically in three southern Xinjiang province cities and in Urumqi since the early-July ethnic violence in the provincial capital, according to local residents. Contacts did not report any increase in restrictions on religious practice following the July violence. Restrictions on foreigners and diplomats have increased in southern Xinjiang following the violence, according to local hotel operators and a Swiss diplomat. Across Xinjiang, a clear propaganda campaign is underway aimed at promoting "ethnic unity." Physical security was at a much higher level than witnessed in visits during the summer 2008 Olympics, with large numbers of People's Armed Police patrolling all cities PolOff visited. In Urumqi, the Rebiya Kadeer Trade Tower and several other buildings in the vicinity were closed and clearly condemned. Some Urumqi residents expressed anger toward Rebiya Kadeer in line with PRC government allegations that she played a role in the July violence. Anger toward Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan appeared equally if not more widespread, with multiple contacts condemning him as corrupt and blaming him for the violence. End Summary.

Unofficial Visit

[1](#)2. (C) PolOff traveled August 25-29 to the southern Xinjiang cities of Hotan (Mandarin: Hetian), Karagilik (Yecheng) and Kashgar (Kashi), as well as regional capital Urumqi. The provincial Foreign Affairs Office was not involved in the trip, so no official meetings took place. PolOff gathered information through informal conversations with local residents.

Increased Ethnic Tensions

[1](#)3. (C) Following deadly riots in Urumqi in early July, southern Xinjiang had seen a dramatic increase in tensions between ethnic Han Chinese and Uighurs, according to multiple residents. According to "Kurt" (protect), a Uighur Christian and forestry expert in Hotan, hatred and increased distrust between Han and Uighur residents of Hotan were the most noticeable results of the Urumqi rioting. Han residents were afraid to enter Uighur-owned stores, asserted Kurt. Hotan Consumer Protection Committee cadre "Xiao Tu" (protect), an ethnic Han, agreed, saying that tensions between Han and Uighur had been getting worse for years but the recent riots had made things "very bad." Asked why

ethnic tensions had increased, a Uighur Hotan taxi driver explained that "all the victims" in Urumqi were Uighurs shot by police during a peaceful commemoration of Uighurs killed in a factory in Shenzhen. Pressed on why there had been no reported violence in Hotan, he said only "we are lucky there aren't many Han here." A Uighur tour guide nicknamed "Patty" said that one reason for the ethnic tensions was that authorities only seemed interested in finding and punishing Uighurs for the Urumqi violence. Not all interlocutors were willing to state that ethnic tensions had increased, however. Yang Yong (protect), a Beijing-trained Hui Imam whose congregation was majority Uighur, claimed that race relations had improved in his neighborhood following the violence. (Note: During our conversation, Yang did not stray from the government line. Yang told PolOff that a plainclothes police officer had visited his mosque shortly after PolOff called to set up a meeting.)

Religious Practice

¶4. (C) Observation of Ramadan was proceeding "smoothly," Imam Yang Yong told PolOff. Yang claimed that increased security presence in Hotan was designed "to ensure the safety of worshipers" during the month of Ramadan. According to Yang, the government did not interfere in celebration of Ramadan, though he noted that as in the past, students under 18 and people whose job performance might be "negatively affected" were not permitted to fast lest it interfere with their duties. PolOff spoke with Muslim Uighurs in Kashgar and Hotan who were fasting and

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reported no interference in their religious practices. In visits to the 8th Elementary School and 1st High School in Hotan, PolOff witnessed female students wearing traditional headscarves. Kurt, the Uighur Christian, reported that existing "government restrictions" on his religion had not changed since the Urumqi violence.

Restrictions on Foreigners and Access to Information

¶5. (C) Police control of foreigners visiting Hotan had increased following the Urumqi violence, said Xiao Tu, the Consumer Protection cadre. The Uighur manager of the Jiangsu Hotel in central Hotan agreed, saying that police had further restricted the number of hotels at which foreigners could stay and she had begun quoting drastically raised prices to foreigners in order to ward them off. In Kashgar, Swiss Guangzhou Consul General Werner Nievergelt told PolOff that despite Guangzhou Foreign Affairs Office assurances that he and his wife would be permitted to vacation in Xinjiang, he had been detained in a town 50 kilometers from the town of Yili and told it was not safe for him to be in Xinjiang at all. Nievergelt reported that the security officials who had stopped him had been "very rude" and had pointed a machine gun at him during his detention. He speculated that it was his diplomatic status that had caused him to be expelled from the region. Internet, text messaging and international calls were all inoperable across Xinjiang during PolOff's visit.

Highly Visible Security

¶6. (C) In all towns visited by PolOff, convoys of between two and seven military troop transport trucks holding approximately twenty armed personnel wearing military fatigues patrolled streets twenty-four hours a day. (Note: Truck license plates and markings were either removed or obscured in virtually all cases. PolOff observed one patrol truck in Hotan and one in Urumqi with visible license plates. In both cases the prefix, WJ 80,

indicated the vehicle belonged to the People's Armed Police.)

¶7. (C) As he observed the passing of a large convoy of troop trucks in Hotan, a Uighur camera salesman turned to PolOff, saying, "I hate them." Pressed to elaborate, the camera salesman would not, saying that he was "too afraid." In Kashgar, PAP units were stationed on street corners and sites including the Id Kah mosque (guarded by more than 80 men), People's Square and various government buildings. In Urumqi, PolOff saw similar static posts across the city but were most prevalent in Uighur areas, where every street corner had at least one post. Armaments at these posts included shotguns, bats, machine guns and rifles with fixed and in some cases uncovered bayonets. PolOff observed Special Police (Te Cha) augmenting PAP posts and guarding government buildings and Hospitals in Urumqi but not Kashgar. Armed PAP and police were deployed at the Urumqi International Exhibition Center, the site of a much publicized upcoming trade show, although efforts were made to reduce their profile by positioning them behind banners. All observed markings and uniforms of armed guards were either those of the People's Armed Police, local municipal police or special police.

Propaganda Campaign Underway

¶8. (C) PolOff observed large numbers of red propaganda banners in all cities visited. The most common themes were "ethnic unity," "combating separatism," and "striking the three evil forces" (i.e., terrorism, separatism, extremism). Also prevalent were wanted posters and announcements warning residents not to house or give aid to outsiders (wailai ren yuan). The Xinhua bookstore in Kashgar had prominently displayed the two-volume "Strengthening Ethnic Unity, Protecting Xinjiang Stability" Propaganda Education Materials, which feature a forward blaming Rebiya Kadeer for inciting the worst violence in Xinjiang in 60 years.

Urumqi - Rebiya Kadeer Building

¶9. (C) PolOff visited the Rebiya Kadeer Trade Tower located in Urumqi's Uighur neighborhood near Erdaoqiao.

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The tower, which still prominently displayed the name "Rebiya" in characters on the roof, had been closed and was clearly condemned. A Uighur shop owner adjacent to the tower suggested that it was being destroyed because of its age. A Han cab driver became angry when PolOff inquired about the building, saying that it was being destroyed because of Rebiya Kadeer's "betrayal." Buildings surrounding the Trade Tower, including one across the street, were in various stages of demolition. The Uighur area in which the building was located had the highest concentration of armed PAP and Special Police that PolOff witnessed in Urumqi and was not far from the PAP staging area located in the parking lot of the Urumqi Theater. The large number of armed PAP made further inquiries with local Uighurs difficult.

Urumqi Public Enemies: Wang Lequan and Rebiya Kadeer

¶10. (C) Two Han cab drivers in Urumqi became visibly upset when PolOff brought up the subject of Rebiya Kadeer and her alleged role in the July violence. One of these cab drivers directed his anger at the United States for "protecting" Kadeer. Not all Han residents with whom PolOff spoke shared these sentiments, however. Another Han Urumqi resident, who gave his surname as Zhang, said that he generally trusted only 30 percent of what the

media said and argued that Rebiya Kadeer should not be blamed for the violence because she "only said some things." A Uighur resident told PolOff that "she is not a bad person" but declined to elaborate.

¶11. (C) In contrast to the mixed emotions expressed about Rebiya Kadeer, no one with whom PolOff spoke defended Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan. Han Urumqi resident Ma Jie (protect) blamed Wang Lequan and his fellow provincial leaders exclusively for the violence. Ma said that he was sure that Wang Lequan would be removed from power following the October National Day celebrations. Ma claimed that all People's Armed Police active in Urumqi were from outside of Xinjiang because local PAP allegiance to Wang made central authorities nervous. Other residents with whom PolOff spoke agreed with this assessment of Wang. An elderly Han cell phone salesman told PolOff that "if Wang Lequan were good and had done his job properly, the Uighurs would not have been angry." Ma Changkui (protect), a Hui taxi driver, told PolOff that it was widely believed that Wang Lequan was very corrupt. Ma lamented what he called the "lack of supervision" in the Chinese system and claimed that PRC President Hu Jintao's visit to Xinjiang earlier in August had been aimed at "supervising" Wang. Ma Changkui agreed that Wang would either be removed from power or transferred following National Day celebrations. Zhang, the skeptical reader of Chinese media, told PolOff that "so many common people did not have to die on July 5" and blamed Wang for the delays in the security response.

HUNTSMAN